

to settle the plans of the intended movement, for after his return to India he shifted, to Pondicherry, obviously to be outside the jurisdiction of the Viceroy.

In spite of this, all might have gone well. The Government were careful, but they did not intend taking any harsh step. When Dalip Singh gave out his intention of visiting India, the Viceroy made arrangements for his stay in the southern peninsula.² But on the eve of his departure Dalip Singh issued an inflammatory address to the Sikhs and also made certain other declarations of a somewhat menacing character. This rendered it necessary, in the opinion of the Government of India, to put in force the special power possessed by the Governor General in Council as soon as the Maharaja came within their jurisdiction at Aden.³

VI

THE ARREST AND RELEASE OF SARDAR LAHNA SINGH MAJITHIA

By Sardar Ganda Singh, Khalsa College, Amritsar.

There is hardly a line to be found in the current works of history on the arrest of so important a person as Sardar Lahna Singh Majithia at Calcutta during the days of the Anglo-Sikh War of December 1845 – February 1846 and his subsequent release in March 1846. Sardar Lahna Singh Majithia, son of Sardar Desa Singh Majithia, was one of the most prominent characters of Sikh history during the declining days of the Lion of the Panjab—Maharaja Ranjit Singh—and during the five years following the death of the great Sikh monarch. But he was not a man of initiative. On the death of Dhian Singh, the Dogra Vizir of Lahore, on September 15, 1843, his son Hira Singh had come to succeed him. He was all powerful, and he played to the tune of his *tantric* preceptor Jallha Pandit. Jallha was a personal enemy of Sardar Lahna Singh. In the reign of chaos and confusion that was then supreme in Lahore, Lahna Singh found his life and property insecure and he, therefore, decided to leave the Panjab. In the first week of Chaitra 1901 Vikrami, corresponding to the third week of March, 1844, Sardar Lahna Singh, Bhai Ram Singh and Bhai Govind Ram left for a visit to the Ganges at Hardwar.

About a month and three weeks later, Jallha prevailed upon Hira Singh, Dogra, the Prime Minister, to despatch an expeditionary force against Bhai Vir Singh, the Saint of Aurangabad, near Tarn Taran in the Amritsar District on the plea of his harbouring malcontent chiefs. The hermitage

1. This view was also expressed by the Lieut. Governor of the Panjab. In his letter to the Government of India, Foreign Department, 7th February, 1887. M. Young Secretary to the Panjab Government wrote: "The Lieut. Governor has reason for believing that Thakur Singh has been an active agent in promulgating the complaints of Maharaja Dalip Singh relative to his treatment by the British Government"; Panjab Government Records. A similar view was expressed by the Sikh community of Gujranwala in their reply to Dalip Singh's manifesto. (*Infra*).
2. Statement of the Under-Secretary of State for India (Mr. Stafford Howard) in the House of Commons, May 25th, 1886. Hansard.
3. *Ibid.*

of the Saint was bombarded on the 8th of May, and among those who were killed were Bhai Vir Singh, Sardar Attar Singh Sandhanwalia, Sardar Jwahir Singh and Prince Kashmira Singh. Evidently this confirmed the fears of Sardar Lahna Singh, and while Bhai Ram Singh and Bhai Govind Ram returned to the Panjab under his express wishes, he removed himself further away and moved on towards Benares,¹ where he could spend his days in peace and prosecute his astronomical and other studies.

Passing through Garh Mukteshwar, Muthra, Bindraban, Pragraj (Allahabad) and Gaya he arrived at Benares. Here he built a house for himself and settled down to a peaceful life. During his stay at Benares, he received frequent solicitations from Hira Singh and several letters from Maharaja Duleep Singh, bearing the seals of all the chiefs, but nothing could move him to return to the Panjab. The Maharaja even deputed two of his agents, Sardar Amar Singh and Bawa Lachhman Singh, to persuade him, and they stayed for about five months with the Sardar, but they could extract his consent.

In the winter of 1845, Sardar Lahna Singh undertook a journey to the eastern provinces with a view to visiting Ganga Sagar² and Jagannath Puri. In the meantime the Anglo-Sikh War broke out on the Panjab frontier. On his departure from the country Sardar Lahna Singh had left the management of his estates in the hands of his half-brother Sardar Ranjodh Singh Majithia, the youngest son of Sardar Desa Singh by another wife. Sardar Ranjodh Singh was then a General in the Sikh Army. With his Brigade, consisting, according to Griffin³, of some ten thousand infantry, sixty guns and some irregular cavalry, he marched on the English cantonment of Ludhiana, set fire to a portion of it and intercepted the force of Sir Harry Smith and inflicted a heavy loss upon him by the capture of almost all the baggage of the army on the 21st January, 1846. This became the plea for the Government of India to place Sardar Lahna Singh under surveillance and to detain the property of the Sardar. The Secretary to the Government with the Governor General in his letter No. 8 of 1846, dated Ferozepore, 9th January, 1846, to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Fort William, informed him that "The Governor General has determined that the property of Leina Sing Mujitheia in our provinces shall be held responsible for the damage which has been, or may be done to the station of Loodhiana by the instrumentality of that Sardar's representative and manager." The President in Council was desired, the letter continued, to "issue instructions for preventing the removal from Benares (or wherever else it may be deposited) of the property in money, jewels, etc., of Sirdar Leina Sing Mujitheia, and that the person of the Sirdar may be placed under surveillance. It is not intended," the Secretary wrote in the third paragraph of the letter "that the restraint under which the Sirdar is placed should be more stringent than is necessary to prevent his leaving the place at which he may now be and to prevent his correspondence by letter or otherwise with the parties in the Panjab."⁴

1. Sohan Lal, *Umdat-ul-Tawarikh*, Vol. IV, Pt. 3, P. 44-45, 54-58; Shah Mohamad, verses 30-1.
2. Also known as 'Sagar, an island at the mouth of the Hugli river, Bengal; a celebrated place of Hindu pilgrimage.
3. *Panjab Chiefs* (1890), I. 272.
4. Proceedings, Government Bengal, Judicial Department, Judicial 28th January, 1846, Vol. 99, Item 136 b.

The Sardar was then at Calcutta on his way back from Ganga Sagar. The instructions were, therefore, passed on to the Government of Bengal on the 20th January, 1846 to be carried into effect.¹

The warrant for the arrest was issued on the 22nd January, 1846. In obedience to this warrant, on 23rd January the Sardar was placed under surveillance. The followers of the Sardar were all disarmed. He, however, considered the carrying away of his arms a matter of disgrace, and as the magistrate found the Sardar to be "extremely reasonable," he "conceded this point and had them placed under guard."

"The Sardar appeared to have very little property with him, at Belgatchya," says the Magistrate, "and his horses and marching establishment to be of little value. I, therefore, deemed it would be a superfluous expense to Government to make a formal attachment of them, as Government would be expected to bear the charge of feeding them. I, therefore, merely had a list made . . . and directed the guards to prevent their removal till further orders . . ."

The Sardar informed Mr. Mytton that he had a boat near the Bagh Bazar bridge, in which his money was deposited, and that as his own men were disarmed he desired that it should be properly guarded. The Magistrate thereupon despatched the Darogha of Chitpore to take care of it and to inform him what it contained. The Magistrate immediately wrote to Sardar Lahna Singh requesting him to depute a confidential person to open the boxes so that an inventory could be taken of their contents. On the morning of the following day, 24th January, 1846, Mr. Mytton sent his head clerk Mr. F. Floyd to make the inventory of the lady's boxes. He, however, at the same time directed him not to insist on the boxes being opened, if the Sardar objected to it. As to the boat, he ordered that it should be shifted as near to the collector's office as circumstances permitted, and that the valuable property in cash and jewels that it contained should be taken out and made over to the Collector of 24 Pergunnahs.² At the request of the Magistrate, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal asked, the Collector "to receive and lodge in security in your treasury such monies and other valuables belonging to Sardar Leina Sing as may be made over to you for that purpose by the Magistrate of your district."

After the Magistrate had arrested the Sardar and placed him under the charge of Captain M. F. Gordon on the morning of 23rd January, 1846, the Sardar detained the Captain till 11 o'clock, detailed his grievances and desired him "to write and inform the Hon'ble Governor that he (Sardar Leina Singh) felt much humiliated by what had taken place in the morning. He said that to escape from the disturbances in the Panjab he had left it, more than two years ago, against the wishes of Hira Singh and others, who had since then frequently solicited him to return, but he was tired of their intrigues and dissensions and had disregarded their invitations; . . . he ought not, he maintained, to be held responsible for the acts of his brother, which he had not prompted, nor could he control them; and he dwelt particularly on the indignity which, he said, had been put upon him, by surrounding his house with sepoys, seizing the arms of his followers and making himself a prisoner.

1. Letter No. 83 of 1846, dated 20th January, 1846, Foreign Department (Secretary) from the Officiating Secretary Government of India, Fort William, to Secretary Government Bengal.

2. R. H. Mytton to Secretary Government, Bengal, No. 77 of 24th January, 1846.

It would have been more courteous, he said, and agreeable to his feelings, to have been placed in Calcutta, under me (Captain Gordon) or any other officer; with the understanding that if he quitted, he should forfeit his liberty or be punished in any way Government might direct.”¹

On the 24th January, 1846 Sardar Lehna Singh handed over to Captain Gordon a petition in Persian to the Deputy Governor, Bengal, which the latter transmitted on the same day to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, with an English translation, as follows :—

Yesterday Mr. Melvill, Mr. Mytton and Captains Lang and Gordon came to me and said that my brother Runjoor Singh had burned the Cantonment of Loodeanah belonging to the British Government and had put to death (several individuals there); on that account Government had determined on placing me under surveillance. I answered what I considered fitting and agreed to all the injunctions of the Government, and I hope the above gentlemen have informed you of it. My history is this. It is two years since I crossed over into British territory with my family and property During my stay I received several letters from the Maharaja of Lahore bearing the seals of all the chiefs, inviting me to return, and Sardar Umar Singh and Baba Lakshmun Singh, confidential servants of the Maharaja even came for me, and remained with me for five months. However, I gave them a positive denial and I did not return. On their receiving letters from the Lahore Government telling them that if I did not accompany them, they were to return without me, they went away Notwithstanding my having brought my family and all my effects into British territory, I find myself in disgrace and a prisoner. It is astonishing if any charge could be brought against me in connection with my brother Runjoor Singh. Even if he were my real brother, yet I cannot be blamed, because it is two years since I left that country and came to this quarter. I did not return there even when I was summoned by the Maharaja. He (Runjoor Singh) is responsible for his own acts. I have nothing to do with them. I have no desire whatsoever to return to Lahore

True Translation.

M. Forbes Gordon, Bart, Captain,
Superintendent of the ex-Ameers of Scinde.²

It was the practice of the followers and servants of the Sardar to speak to him, or among themselves in his presence, in a very low tone. This was misunderstood by Captain Gordon on the 23rd January, 1846, when he first visited him in company with the Magistrate and reported to the Military Secretary to the Governor of Bengal on the same day saying: “I scarcely know yet what to think of this chief, but the constant whisperings among his followers after you left this morning and other signs lead me to apprehend that he has to answer to us for more than the burning of Loodhiana by his brother, and if he is even suspected of intrigue, it would I confess, be more satisfactory to me if he could be placed where I could exercise a more personal surveillance over him than in his present residence. I would also withdraw from the compound the whole of the arms (his own excepted, and dismiss some

1. Captain M. F. Gordon to Military Secretary to Governor, Bengal, 23rd January, 1846.

2. Gordon to Secretary Government, Bengal, 24th January, 1846.

of his followers, if he is suspected of having intrigues against or being in any way inimical to Government.”¹

But Captain Gordon soon realised his mistake and corrected it in his letter of the 26th January. “I write a line to say,” he wrote to the Military Secretary, “that I have a better opinion of the Sirdar than when I had the pleasure of addressing you last, as I find that the whispering I then alluded to as having a suspicious nature, is the ordinary mode in which the attendants address the chief when they have anything to say however trifling. I have been a good deal with him and my impression is that he has given a true account of himself.”²

In acknowledging the receipt of Captain Gordon’s letters of 23rd and 26th January and of the petition of Sardar Lehna Singh, the Secretary to the Government of Bengal referred to the Captain the remarks of Mr. Floyd in his report of 26th January, that the Sardar was visited by a number of persons from Calcutta under suspicious circumstances and desired him to let him (the Secretary) know whether the report was correct in that respect and whether he had any explanations to make on the subject.³ To this Captain Gordon replied on the 30th : “that since the Sirdar was arrested, I have visited him always once, and generally twice every day, and have invariably found him with a few of his followers. The individuals alluded to in the report, as having been with the Sirdar on the morning in question, were two native merchants from Calcutta, and one or two servants of the Baboo to whom the house belongs, all of whom had permission from me to visit him . . . This morning I instructed the Jamadar of the Guard to admit no person to the Sardar, except his own dependents.”⁴

Sardar Lehna Singh had in his possession several letters from the Lahore Durbar written to him during his sojourn at Benares, desiring him with many liberal promises, to return to Lahore. These Captain Gordon recommended him to forward to the Government and also the copies of his replies, which he had kept, and in which he had assigned reasons for not returning the Panjab, being tired of politics.⁵ On this the Sardar desired Captain Gordon to forward to the Government the English translation of a *Parwana* dated 6th Jeth, 1902 Vikrami, 18th May, 1845, from Maharaja Duleep Singh remonstrating with him for having left the Panjab and soliciting him, with promises of honour and preferment, to return to his country. Captain Gordon sent it on to the Secretary of the Government of Bengal under his letter No. 10 of 1846, dated 28th January 1846; saying that the Sardar’s “object in forwarding this letter is to satisfy Government that he is travelling in British territory from motives unconnected with politics and that he has incurred the displeasure of the Lahore Darbar by declining their urgent solicitations to return to the Panjab.”⁶

As all the cash of the Sardar had been removed from his boat and lodged in the Alipore Treasury and the boxes containing the wearing apparel of his wife and her attendants had also been removed, the

1. Captain Gordon to the Military Secretary, 23rd January, 1846.

2. Captain Gordon to Military Secretary, 26th January, 1846.

3. Secretary Government, Bengal to Captain Gordon, 28th January, 1846.

4. Captain Gordon to Secretary Government Bengal, No. 15 of 1846, 30th January, 1846.

5. Captain Gordon to Military Secretary, 26th January, 1846.

6. Captain Gordon to Secretary, No. 10, 28th January, 1846.

Deputy Governor advanced him Rs. 5,000 (Rs. 3,000 for his monthly expenses and Rs. 2,000 to liquidate his bazar debts) from his own funds deposited in the treasury of the Collector of 24 Pergunnahs. The wearing apparel of his wife and her attendants were also made over to him.¹ Further requests of the Sardar for another advance of Rs. 13,300 and for arrangements to have his pinnacle coppered by a competent boat-builder were favourably considered by the Government and necessary arrangements were made, without any delay, to comply with his wishes.² There was, however, some protracted correspondence regarding the restoration of money and jewels found among the wearing apparel of the Sardar's wife.³

During the five weeks that had elapsed since his arrest, Sardar Lehna Singh felt harassed and uneasy under the guard that had been placed over him, and he, therefore, submitted on the 3rd March, 1846, the following memorial to the Government of Bengal requesting that the guard over him might be removed :

"It is quite apparent to Your Honour that five weeks have elapsed since a guard has been placed over me. I have already sent to Your Honour a memorial from which your Honour might have become acquainted with the whole of my circumstances, but as I have not yet been honoured with a reply, I beg to write that from having a guard placed over me, I am much harassed and unable to move about according to my own perception (*sic*). I have neither committed any crime nor have I done any unworthy action. But it is now two years since . . . I left my country with the whole of my family under the shadow of the *Sahiban* for my own comfort and welfare, and to that end I have built a house there. When Sardar Amar Singh and Bawa Luchman Singh, the confidential servants of the Maharaja of Lahore were ordered to bring me back, your Honour must be well aware of the positive refusal I gave them in the presence of Major Carpenter, the Resident at Benares, and I wrote a petition to the Maharaja and refused to return to the country. I afterwards obtained a letter from the Resident at Benares, to your Honour's address as also a pass and *chuprassies* But guards of *Sahiban* have been placed over me. If there be any charge against me, I hope it will be made known to me ; otherwise Your Honour will be pleased to relieve me from the hardship of the guard ; and though it be the pleasure of your Honour that I should live at Calcutta for some days more, yet I hope the guards will be removed ; and I will stop here as long as your Honour shall order me, and at the expiration of those days I will obtain my discharge from Your Honour together with a letter to the address of the Resident at Benares. Your Honour by way of kindness will order Captain Gordon to visit me as long as I am here, and to transact for me any business which may occur.

True Translation.

M. F. Gordon, Bart, Captain,
Superintendent of the Ex-Ameers of Scinde.⁴

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1. Secretary to Captain, Gordon 6th February, 1846, Gordon to Secretary, 6th February, 1846, Under Secretary to Bengal Government to Collector 24 Pergunnahs 10th February, 1846.
 2. Gordon to Secretary, 2nd March, 1846 ; Secretary to Gordon No. 69, 1846, 7th March, 1846, etc.
 3. 6th February, 1846 ; 10th February, 1846 ; etc.
 4. Gordon to Secretary, Bengal, No. 36, 3rd March, 1846.

At this time news arrived from the Panjab that hostilities between the Sikhs and the British Government had ceased and that friendship had been re-established between the two powers. The Sardar, thereupon felt that there was no cause for his further detention and he therefore wrote as follows to the Hon'ble Sir Herbert Maddock on the 6th March, 1846:

A. C.

I have sent to your Honour the accounts of my circumstances, but I have not as yet been honoured and gratified with a reply. I am told just now by Captain Gordon that between the two Governments of the Honorable Company and the Maharaja of Lahore, the rules of friendship and unity are established anew, and so I entertain great hopes that Your Honour has not only held a consultation for my enlargement but for issuing orders to set me at liberty, I, therefore, beg to solicit that as the hot season is fast approaching, Your Honour (will be pleased) to issue orders for my freedom as soon as Your Honour can do so in order that through Your Honour's kindness I may obtain my discharge and after visiting the places of worship, I may return to Benares and live comfortably.¹

The Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, to whom the Sardar's memorial of the 3rd March had been forwarded by the Government of Bengal, replied on the 7th March, 1846, in his letter No. 69, to say that "The President in Council is of opinion that in consideration of the late progress of events in the war with the Seikhs, Sirdar Lehna Sing may be properly relieved from the condition of surveillance in which, on requisition from the Governor General, he has for some time been held, and His Honour in Council, therefore, desires that the guard now stationed at the Sirdar's residence may be withdrawn.

"Before restoring to the Sirdar his property, which at the time of his arrest was attached in order to meet any demands against him in compensation for damages incurred by the conduct of the troops of his brother Ranjoor (Runjodh) Sing the President in Council will make a reference to the Governor General and await the expression of His Excellency's wishes on the subject."

The guard in question was removed from the Sirdar's residence on the following morning, 8th March, 1846. But it was not possible for him to leave Calcutta without the restoration of his property. He, therefore, submitted to the Hon'ble Sir Herbert Maddock, Deputy Governor, Bengal the following memorial on the 11th March, 1846:

On Sunday, the 27th of Phaugun Captain Gordon came and removed the guard which had been placed over me and said that through the kindness of the *Sahiban* I was set at liberty; he also stated that there would be a little delay in restoring the whole of my money, etc., which is in deposit with the Collector, and I, therefore, beg to represent to Your Honour that the hot season is now at hand, and (one) generally suffers from travelling (at that time) and without receiving my property how can my departure take place? I hope that (Your Honour) by way of kindness will restore the whole of the property to me and will also give me a pass together with a letter for Major Carpenter, in order that I may reach Benares and live comfortably. The rest of my history is known to Your Honour, that I have neither an account with anyone, nor

1. Gordon to Secretary Bengal, No. 28, 6th March, 1846.

do I concern myself about public affairs, because it is now two years since I left my country for this and built a house at Benares under the shadow of the *Sahiban* solely for the purpose of visiting the places of worship and serving the Almighty. I hope Your Honour will be pleased to restore to me my property and to permit me to depart hence as soon as practicable, and it will put me under great obligation to you.

True Translation.

M. Fobes Gordon,

*Superintendent of the Ex-Ameers of Scinde.*¹

This memorial, in turn, was forwarded by the Government of Bengal to the Government of India, Foreign Department, on the 18th March "for the consideration and orders of the supreme Government" and the final orders were issued by the latter on the 28th March, 1846, saying "that His Honour the President in Council is of opinion that the property may be released and the Sirdar is at liberty to return to Benares."²

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1. Proceedings Judicial Department, Judicial Branch, 8th April, 1846, O. C. 73.
 2. Under Secretary, Bengal to Officiating Secretary, Government of India, Foreign Department, No. 532, 18th March, 1846; Officiating Secretary Government of India to Secretary, Bengal, No. 89, 28th March, 1846.